



Mentoring Program Profile:

Things to Consider and Do

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WHY A NEED FOR MENTORS?

Across the country, concern about the **growing isolation of troubled and low-income young people** has inspired a search for ways to link these youth with caring adult role models. Generally parents are the central source of emotional and social support for their children. Many children are fortunate to be a part of a larger network that includes grandparents, other relatives, neighbors, community and church organizations. The adults in these networks can offer children extra attention, affection, role modeling, guidance and a sense of positive direction.

Unfortunately, many children have no such resources. They live in families that are under tremendous economic, social and emotional pressure. Many of these troubled families are isolated in communities/neighborhoods plagued by poor educational institutions; drugs, alcohol and related criminal activities; poverty; divorce and/or single parent families; teen pregnancy and other high emotional and psychological stresses. As a result, **the children who are in the greatest need of help from outside of the family are often the least likely to get it.**

Our children are a national responsibility; they deserve our care and guidance. The complexity of today's society demands that the responsibility for the well being of our children extend beyond the home and school. Our survival as a nation depends on how well we nurture and challenge them. Planned mentoring programs have been identified as one promising strategy in rebuilding adult-youth connections and combating the effects and the threat of persistent poverty. **Planned mentoring programs can be a way to bridge the chasm between troubled, low-income youth and the caring adults** from a variety of backgrounds who can make a difference in their lives.

WHAT ARE MENTORS AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

Mentors are concerned adults who possess a sense of moral and civil responsibility as well as a desire to share themselves. They pass on to a younger person (or peer) skills and/or wisdom that has proven to be effective in dealing with their life circumstances, conditions and endeavors. In order to succeed in this regard, a successful mentor must accomplish at least two steps – make a connection with a child and use that connection to convey a message(s).

The type of assistance that mentors provide to children is determined by the program's focus (or the mentor's intentions), which is directed at the specific needs of a certain population of children. Therefore, mentors serve as:

1. **companions (Big Brother/Sister);**
2. **tutors;**
3. **role models;**
4. **career guidance counselors, etc.**

Mentors act as friends. They share activities. They share academic and professional information and experiences. Mentors say, in effect: "You are worth my time and effort because you are a valuable human being. I can offer you, by my word or deed or by the example of my life, ways to expand your horizons and to increase the likelihood that you will achieve success."

GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING A MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Identify and articulate the needs for your mentorship program and/or identify the targeted youth population and related social issues the program wishes to address:

- Very young children (5-10 years);
- Youth (11-15 years);
- Young adults (16 – older);
- Drug and substance abuse (youth gangs);
- Teen pregnancy;
- Youth offenders;
- At-risk youth (prevention);
- Academics (tutors);
- Career/job professions.

Assess program resources (money, space, support activities, community/general support, access to mentors/volunteers) to determine how ambitious (big) the program should be:

- Ability to assemble a committed and influential board of directors (advisory board);
- Access and ability to recruit and sustain the morale of potential mentors and volunteers;
- Ability to garner support of (major) community movers and shakers and resources, i.e., mayor's office, school district, city office of recreational and social services, businesses, churches, colleges and universities, civic leaders, etc.;
- Ability to attract funds and in-kind resources for at least minimal needs, i.e., program and support staff, office and support activity space, funds for group activities, etc.

Based on your identified resources, **determine specific program endeavors, goals, and objectives, and size of the program:**

- Determine specific intervention effort, i.e., target population, social issue/concern;
- Determine size of your program, i.e., five mentors for five mentees, 50 mentors for 50 mentees, etc.

Identify and lock-in augmenting and community support resources:

- Board of directors/advisory board;
- Actual prospective mentors and/or a successful mentor;
- Recruitment plan;
- School district;
- Municipal recreation or social services department;
- Corporate and business leaders;
- Elected officials;

- Professional and social clubs:
 - Attorneys;
 - Rotary club;
 - Fraternities/sororities;
 - Civic and neighborhood groups

Set up office(s) and determine process and/or points of cooperation and involvement with community support groups:

- Staff director;
- Office and equipment;
- Orient staff, board and potential mentors;
- Determine program and mentor/mentee goals, objectives and activities;
- Determine criteria for selection of mentor (mentees);
- Determine ground rules:
 - Mentor expectations;
 - Mentee expectations;
 - Parent expectations;
 - Staff expectations
- Orient community support network;
- Implement mentor recruitment means/process;
- Implement mentee recruitment means/process.

Determine central office support function

- Point of mentor, mentee contact;
- Point of community contact;
- Develop, conduct and monitor training workshop/seminars;
- Develop and conduct group activities;
- Serve as liaison between mentors, mentees and parents.

Mentor training, follow-up, support activities and services

- Initial or general training workshops;
- Develop and delivery of on-going and/or special needs and problem solving training;
- Develop an inter-mentoring support group;
- Develop and structure program activities;
- One-on-one mentorship plan;
- Group mentoring.

Making mentor/mentee “matches”

- Making matches (things to consider);
- Socio-psychological dynamics of problems to be addressed, i.e., drug culture, teen pregnancy, academic, etc.;

- Background and lifestyle considerations regarding mentor and mentee;
- General personality (i.e., low key, up beat), character, hobbies, socio-economic considerations:
 - Gender, ethnicity;
 - Point of contact (neighborhoods, community);
 - One-on-one matches;
 - Group matches – to allow for natural selection (groups can meet in training room(s), field trips, other joint activities).

Community outreach and fundraising

- Community and public relations outreach;
- Media outreach strategy;
- Fundraising:
 - Special events;
 - Proposals/grants;
 - Mail and phone solicitations;
 - Media and special events presentations.